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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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SOURCE EVALUATIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.

1. The self-criticism contained in Georgiy M. Malenkov's letter of resignation as Chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers is different from the better-known self-criticisms uttered in the past by other Soviet leaders. It differs in the following particulars:
 - a. It contains no admission of ideological deviationism or of error in political thinking.
 - b. It does not indicate any disagreement with the direction of economic policy as a whole.
 - c. It does not refer to a particular aspect of agrarian policy (as in the case of A. A. Andreyev's former self-criticism).
 - d. It touches only incidentally upon heavy industry and is completely silent on defense and light industry.

Malenkov's culpability is, instead, limited to the agricultural sector of the economy; but it embraces it in its entirety, as he revealed by his resignation statement in the phrase "guilt and responsibility for the unsatisfactory state of affairs which has arisen in agriculture". Nevertheless, the blame which Malenkov attributes to himself does not seem to extend to the planning, but only to the execution of agrarian policy.

2. It is for good reason that Malenkov was obliged to attribute the reform in Soviet agrarian policy explicitly to the initiative and the suggestions of the Central Committee of the CPSU. This reform, which was the substance of the "new look" in Soviet agriculture and which was based upon a greater individual sharing of profits by the peasants, had been attributed in August 1953 by the Soviet rural masses, and not only them, to Malenkov personally. In the rural areas this rhymed couplet used to circulate: "Da, spasibo Malenkovu, razreshili imet korovu" (Yes, thanks to Malenkov, it is permitted to have a cow). Thus, Malenkov was obliged to divest himself of the credit upon which he had built his popularity among the millions of peasants.

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3. There are persons who have evaluated Malenkov's resignation statement as a skillfull unloading of responsibility. According to this argument, Malenkov's denial of responsibility for the agrarian reforms could be useful in preventing accusations of "Bukharinism". In any event, it would be more difficult to accuse Malenkov of having tried to undermine the Socialist economy by means of reforms which led to the enrichment and resurgence of the kulak class, since now the responsibility for the beneficial reforms has been assumed by the Central Committee of the Party. However, to the supporters of this argument, it is useful to point out Stalin's practice of leading his adversaries into successive and ever more ruinous self-criticisms.
4. That Malenkov was in fact the top official in Soviet agricultural matters, as he alleges in his resignation statement, is apparently incorrect. A. A. Andreyev was the individual who occupied the leading position in Soviet agriculture until his fall in February 1950. Thereafter, N. S. Khrushchev became the new agricultural expert. In March 1951, however, the Pravda article in which Khrushchev's agrogorod program was unexpectedly disavowed made it clear that someone within the Politburo had succeeded in applying the brakes to Khrushchev's enterprising spirit. That individual is believed to have been Malenkov.
5. There are signs which indicate that L. P. Beriya, a notorious ally of Malenkov, was also against Khrushchev's agrogorod program. In fact, one may remember that the program was openly attacked by Armenian Party Secretary G. A. Aryutinov and Azerbaydzhanian Party Secretary M. D. Bagirov, both proteges of Beriya and both purged along with him. Khrushchev, who was probably the chief author of Beriya's removal, had thus also avenged himself on Aryutinov and Bagirov.
6. It is probable, but not certain, that, at the time of the disavowal of Khrushchev's program, the Politburo turned over the control of agriculture to Malenkov. If this is true, then Malenkov would have been able to direct the agricultural sector of the economy during the last two years of Stalin's life. Having become Chairman of the Council of Ministers in March 1953, Malenkov certainly exercised a substantial influence in the important reforms in agricultural taxes in August 1953. However, it is certain that by September 1953 the upper hand in agriculture had returned to Khrushchev, who from that time on has carried out ever more ambitious programs in this sphere. On Khrushchev, therefore, rests the responsibility for the present situation.
7. With regard to Khrushchev's program for opening up the virgin lands, which was backed up by the plenum of the Central Committee early in 1954, one may ask whether it is even thinkable that Malenkov, as head of the Soviet Government, might have been in manifest disagreement with this program. However, there is also the hypothesis that Malenkov was allowing Khrushchev a great deal of leeway, with the secret hope that Khrushchev would ruin himself by pursuing projects which were as grandiose as they were difficult to accomplish. On the other hand, it is probable that Malenkov still believed, at least until such international events as the proposed creation of SEATO and WEU caused a breach in his so-called conciliatory foreign policy, that he, Malenkov, could carry on his program of greater well-being for the Soviet populace by means of the continued production of consumers' goods; thereby, Malenkov would quickly have torn down Khrushchev's plans and consolidated his own prestige. In this regard, it is to be noted that the continued expansion of Khrushchev's plans required greater means and investments and was therefore prejudicial to the execution of the Malenkov program.
8. It may be concluded that Malenkov's self-criticism does not stand up under scrutiny, except perhaps only in the slightest degree. The Central Committee of the CPSU could not make known the real issues of the dissension which broke out at the highest Party levels, but limited itself to accusing Malenkov of charges designed to discredit him in public opinion: his alleged inexperience and consequent incapacity to govern (which is contradicted by the known facts of his Party and Government career), and his alleged responsibility for the evident agricultural crisis which afflicts the country.

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